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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on the implementation of strategies to improve student listening skills. The targeted population consisted of primary elementary students located in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city. The lack of students' listening abilities was documented through the use of journals, surveys, checklists, and anecdotal records. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked skills related to listening. Reviews of curricular content and instruction strategies showed listening skills were not taught or modeled in the classroom. A review of solution strategies suggested by experts in the field of listening and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of three subskills: imagery, predicting, and paraphrasing. Teacher modeling and giving the students a purpose for listening were also utilized. Post intervention data indicated an increase in student listening skills when directly related to the research activities. The teacher researchers' anecdotal records did not imply a transfer of the learned skills into everyday situations. Appendixes contain interview questions, survey instruments, checklists, and rubrics. (Contains 34 references, 17 figures, and 7 tables.) (Author/RS)

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Improving Listening Skills in the Classroom

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This report focuses on the implementation of strategies to improve student listening skills. The targeted population consisted of primary elementary students located in the suburbs of a large midwestern city. The lack of students' listening abilities was documented through the use of journals, surveys, checklists, and anecdotal records.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked skills related to listening. Reviews of curricular content and instruction strategies showed listening skills were not taught or modeled in the classroom.

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Post intervention data indicated an increase in student listening skills when directly related to the research activities. The teacher researchers' anecdotal records did not imply a transfer of the learned skills into everyday situations.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Listening skills are an integral part of a child's education. In the targeted schools, students display a lack of effective listening skills. Teacher observation of student's behavior, listening journals, and comprehension questions provide evidence that this problem exists.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A District

Site A is located in a northwestern suburb of a major midwestern city. The district is the second largest district in the state and services seven communities. It is a unit district composed of four high schools, seven middle schools and 37 elementary schools. The average teaching experience is 15.8 years, 46.1% of these teachers hold bachelor's degrees and 53.9% hold master's degrees or above. The ethnic breakdown of the full-time faculty is as follows: 88% White, 8.2% Hispanic, 2.9% Black, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.1% Native American. The faculty is 77.2% female and 22.8% is male. The average teacher salary is $45,477. The average administrator salary

is $73,715. The district's total enrollment is 31,650 with $5,558 spent per pupil annually (School Report Card, 1996).

Site A School

Site A School was established in August 1996 enrolling 600 children from one community. The school is a two-story building set in a residential area with three-park district owned baseball fields in the rear and no playground equipment. The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) is very involved with this school. PTO holds several fund-raisers to provide money for supplemental educational materials. Site A School population includes an ethnic breakdown as follows: 82.8% White, 10.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% Hispanic, 1.8% Black and 0.2% Native American. The population includes 6.2% of students from low-income households and 3.2% of students who are Limited-English-Proficient. Free lunches are made available to students who qualify. Of the student population 96.9% attend school regularly with a mobility rate of 10.8%. Site A School contains 28 classrooms, kindergarten through sixth grade. Each classroom has one teacher with an average of 26.8 children per class (School Report Card, 1996).

The mission statement of Site A School is to "create a child-centered community which provides a safe, caring environment, focusing on the education of the whole child, committed to empowering children to become good citizens and life long learners"(School Mission Statement, 1996). To carry out this intent, the school employs 28 regular classroom teachers, an all school reading support person, a second grade reading support person, a speech and language therapist, a social worker, a psychologist, a school nurse, a cooperative interventionist who assists the classroom teacher with interventions for inclusion students, a teacher for each special including art, music,

library/computer lab, band orchestra, physical education, and a full-time and part-time learning resource consultant. In addition to the extensive staff, the elementary school offers a one semester gifted program for grades one through three and alternative gifted programs for grades four through six at a cooperating school in the district. Extracurricular programs include a five week program called After-School Academy that offers a range of activities from sports to crafts, Spanish and French club, Homework club, Brownies, Girl Scouts, Science Fair in the spring and Scholastic Bowl.

Site A Classroom is one of four regular education second grade rooms at the school. School begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. with a 45 minute lunch break from 11:15 a.m. to noon. The curriculum includes weekly averages of 700 minutes of language arts, 300 minutes of math, 300 minutes of either science or social studies, 200 minutes of specials and 65 minutes of supervised physical activity. This classroom has an IBM compatible computer with Internet access and a variety of educational software. The room computer is linked with all the other school computers as well as the 25 computers in the lab. There is also a mounted television and VCR with cable access.

Site A Community

The surrounding community of Site A has a population of 39,166 people. The median home cost is $157,040 with the median household income being $62,692. Seventy percent of the homes are owner occupied. The east side of the community is primarily industrial corporations while the west side is mostly residential. Seven different school districts serve this town. There are 29 parks and playgrounds, two public swimming pools, a forest preserve and a prairie path available to Site A Community.

The park district provides over 40,000 square feet of indoor recreation area. Fifteen churches of various denominations serve the religious organizations in this area.

Site B District

Site B District is located in a western suburb of a large midwestern city. Established in 1954, it is a privately funded residential facility and does not belong to any public school districts. The school at Site B serves children in preschool through grade twelve. One building holds a high school and a middle school in one wing, and an elementary school in another. The preschool is located in an adjacent building. In addition to the two academic buildings, the school campus also includes an indoor swimming pool, bowling alley and playground, an elementary gymnasium, a middle school/high school field house with football stadium, baseball fields and an auditorium. The average teaching experience on campus is 8.6 years. Seventy seven percent of teachers hold a bachelor's degree and 23% hold a master's degree or above. The uniqueness of Site B requires the ethnic and gender breakdown of the teachers to be reported by school rather than by district. This breakdown is as follows: 100% White and 100% Female. The average teacher salary is $30,246. The average administrator salary is unavailable due to private funding. Since Site B is a residential facility that services 226 children the annual per pupil spending is $60,000.

The children at Site B come from various backgrounds. Many are products of unstable environments. Some children have experienced death of a primary caregiver, abusive behavior, living with a substance abuser, or severe poverty. Legal guardians must apply for their children's admission into Site B. The children are then screened and can be accepted to the program at any age. Once a child is accepted, Site B receives

temporary guardianship. If a child resides at Site B from ninth through twelfth grade or more and holds a GPA of 3.0 or higher they are awarded a 2 year scholarship to the college of his or her choice. If he or she is able to keep good standing throughout the first 2 years of college he or she is awarded another scholarship to finish his or her education. This can also include a master's program.

Site B School

The elementary school at Site B has 91 students in grades kindergarten through five. There are 54 boys and 37 girls. The average class size in a regular self contained classroom is 14.8 students. There are six regular classrooms and two self-contained learning disability/behavior disorder resource rooms. The resource rooms average 6.5 students.

The mission of Site B school is "to provide a safe, loving, environment which enables children to grow through a holistic and individual needs approach that encourages mutual respect and offers a nurturing and personalized program with the goal of graduating a positive, accomplished citizen able to cope with and take a productive place in society" (School Mission Statement, 1984). To carry out this intent Site B employs one principal, six regular teachers, two resource teachers, four teacher assistants, and one teacher for each special including art, music, library, computer lab, band, physical education, Catholic education and Protestant education. There is also an extensive support staff consisting of two on-site counselors, a behavior interventionist, a consulting psychiatrist, two speech and language pathologists, a special education consultant and an occupational therapist contracted from outside the community.

Site B school has vast behavioral concerns, therefore a time-out room and a padded calming room are available for those students in need of de-escalation time. It is mandatory for all staff to be trained in Crisis Prevention and Intervention. School programs at the elementary level include: a drug awareness class called D.A.R.E., a student-adult mentor program, lunch hour gifted meetings, and social skills curriculum adapted from the Boy's Town Model of Omaha, Nebraska. Extracurricular activities include brownies, boy scouts, girl scouts, 4-H, swim team, hockey, basketball, baseball and football. Junior Reserve Officer Training Core (JROTC), cosmetology school and a work study co-op program are also available for the high school students. Site B also provides an exchange program through an affiliated organization in England as well as an out reach program for at-risk students from a nearby city.

Site B Classroom

Site B Classroom is the only third grade classroom and has fifteen students. School begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. with students returning home for an hour lunch break. The curriculum includes weekly averages of 700 minutes of language arts instruction, 300 minutes of math instruction and 300 minutes of either science or social studies, 90 minutes of art, music, and library and 45 minutes of technology. Site B classroom has a MacIntosh Apple IIe, and access to televisions, VCRs, laser disc systems and a computer lab that has twenty-seven computers with Internet access.

Site B Community

The community of Site B consists of 1200 square acres of land, 900 of which are designated farmland. The farm includes prize winning Holstein and Black Angus cattle that supply the milk for the community, a variety of animals, horse stables, and a petting

zoo. The community is also comprised of a post office, a bank, and restaurant, a general store, a church, a cemetery, a health center, two clothing stores, five playgrounds, walking trails, and a mile long lake. There are thirty-four residential homes for the students. Thirty of these are currently occupied. Each home has an average of 12 children and is supported by a team of full-time family parents that are relieved by shift workers twice weekly. There are childcare managers and counselors who monitor the success of the children and are available 24 hours a day.

Site C District

Site C is located in a southwest suburb of a large midwestern city. The district is a unit district composed of one high school, two middle schools and six elementary schools. The average teaching experience of this district is 10.9 years, 68.6% of the teachers hold bachelor's degrees and 31.4% hold master's degrees or above. Of the teachers in the district 22.2% are male and 77.8% are female. The ethnic breakdown of full-time faculty is as follows: 99.1% White, 0.8% Hispanic, and 0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander. The average teacher salary is $36,649. The average administrator salary is $69,930. The district's total enrollment is 7884 with $4430 spent per pupil annually (School Report Card, 1997).

Site C School

Site C school was established in 1997 and currently enrolls 785 students. The school is a two-story building located in a residential community. Site C school includes an ethnic breakdown as follows: 78.5% White, 12.6% Hispanic, 4.9% Black, 3.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.76% American Indian. Of this population 0.9% are from low-income households, 0.76% receive free lunches, and 2.1% are Limited-English-

Proficient. The rate of regular attendance for this school is 96.2% with a mobility rate of 21.3%.

The mission statement of site C school is the following:

> The learning community, which accepts and respects the diversity of all individuals, is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment which encourages problem solving and self-motivated inquiry as part of the learning process. By empowering students through best teaching and learning practices and with a strong home-school link, we will develop confident, enthusiastic learners who are highly literate, collaborative decision makers, inspired to exceed expectations, and prepared to become successful, productive citizens in an ever changing and technological society (School Mission Statement, 1997).

In order to carry out the goals of this mission statement the school employs 24 regular classroom teachers, two special education early childhood teachers, two learning disability resource teachers, one learning disabilities self contained teacher, one behavior disorders self contained teacher, one communication development self contained teacher, two physical education teachers, two art teachers, one music teacher, one media teacher, two reading specialists, one gifted program resource teacher, four speech and language pathologists, eight special education assistants, regular education assistants, two social workers, one psychologist, one part-time occupational therapist, and one part-time physical therapist.

Site C classroom is a special education communication development setting. This classroom services fourteen children in grades first through third that have severe speech and language disorders that impact upon their communication skills. A number of these

students also have secondary learning disabilities. The classroom is staffed full-time with one special education teacher, one speech and language pathologist, one classroom assistant, and one student assistant.

School begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 3:35 p.m. with a 50-minute lunch break. The curriculum consists of weekly averages of 585 minutes of language arts, 225 minutes of math, 320 minutes of language development, 105 minutes of learning centers that contain exposure to science and social studies and 235 minutes of specials. In addition, each student receives 45 minutes of individual speech and language instruction per week.

Site C classroom has a mounted television with VCR access and access to a computer lab that has 31 computers with Internet access and a variety of educational software.

Site C Community

Site C is located in a rapidly growing, suburban area. The population of this community had increased 50.6% from 1980 to 1993. During this time the community has transformed from a small town atmosphere to a highly residential area with twenty new housing developments.

The residential growth of this community has generated the need for many new schools. Within the past three years two elementary schools and one middle school have been built within the district. As of November, 1997, 84.9 million dollars has been generated in referendums.

The median home cost of this community is $158,252 with the median household income being $58,169. The park district in the Site C community provides 18 parks totaling 265 acres that include nature areas, picnic sites, athletic fields, an outdoor

swimming pool, fishing ponds, canoe launches, outdoor ice skating areas, and playgrounds.

National Context of Problem

The art of listening is not an intrinsic skill (Jalongo 1991). Many times children are asked to listen carefully to an activity in class, but not given any instruction as to how to listen. Teachers tell children of the importance of listening skills, yet often model poor listening skills themselves. Funk and Funk (1989) suggest that the major reason listening instruction is neglected in the classroom is that many teachers do not feel they have the training to teach it. However, classroom listening skills are one of the most influential skills a student can have. The ability to listen effectively is a crucial part of the education process (Funk and Funk 1989).

Many educators world-wide are concerned about poor listening skills. The strong influence of television allows children to be passive listeners, or listeners who perceive sound but do not process its meaning. However, Jalongo (1995) states that good listeners are actively processing information and constantly filtering what they hear in order to concentrate on what is being communicated. Students need a structured framework in which to question, organize and evaluate information.

Educators spend much time analyzing and reviewing curricular areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics. There are instructional guides, inservices and methods classes for the preceding subjects (Swanson 1996). Conversely, Swanson (1996) affirms that few educators have any sort of training for listening skills and many teachers have not seen courses or training material specifically related to listening. Listening does remain as a highly important ability to those in the educational field.

According to Strother (1987), researchers often reject the study of listening as it is too complex. This, coupled with many educators exclusion of listening skills instruction, may be a great disservice to the nation's children. Approximately 80% of what people learn is obtained through listening. Yet, according to Hunsaker, American adults listen with only about 25% efficiency (as cited in Jalongo, 1995). Therefore, teaching listening skills as a standard part of school curriculum is essential for effective learning and long overdue in the educational process.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the lack of student listening skills, student interviews, parent surveys, an observation checklist, listening comprehension questions and listening journals were administered at Sites A, B, and C. The teacher researchers' intent was to gain insight on perceptions and use of listening skills in the classroom.

Site A

In February, eight students were chosen to participate in this listening study. There are several reasons eight students were chosen. It is easier to track a small number of students than a whole class. The teacher researcher selected students of varying academic ability. She chose students who showed different levels of social awareness, such as making appropriate classroom comments, initiating play with others and working with groups of children to reach a goal.

Eight students were interviewed about their perceptions of listening (Appendix A). The students were interviewed individually and their oral responses were recorded by the teacher researcher. The interview consisted of eleven questions. Five of those

questions required yes or no answers. The responses to those five questions appear in Table 1.

The other questions asked students to describe various actions related to listening. Students responded that a good listener would use the quiet sign up (two fingers up in the air, as commonly used in schools), look at the person, be quiet, sit at one's desk, raise one's hand, get good grades and pay attention. Students reported similar answers when asked how one would know if someone were listening to him or her. The responses included looking at the person, sitting still, being quiet, not talking to others and not fiddling with things. Students communicated that they listen best when people are talking directly to them, when directions are being given, when at school, when in line, and when they like something. They reported similar answers when asked the time they should listen best. The answers included during directions, at school, when asked something, when someone is talking, when something is new, if there is a safety rule, or if something is important.

Table 1

Site A Student Interview, February 1999

Question	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do you think you are a good listener?	7	1	0
Do you think your teacher is a good listener?	8	0	0
Do you think you could/should listen better?	6	1	1
Do you feel your parents are good listeners?	6	Mom-yes Dad-no	1

Table 1 shows students generally believe they are good listeners. When asked if they thought they were good listeners, 88% answered yes and 12 % answered sometimes.

However, when asked if they could become better listeners, 75% responded yes, 12.5% responded sometimes (maybe) and 12.5% responded no. Students unanimously believe their teacher is a good listener; however, the teacher was conducting the interview. Seventy-five percent of students believe their parents are good listeners and 12.5% believe parents are not good listeners. The other 12.5% believe their mother is a very good listener but father is not very good. Students reported extrinsic reasons for the importance of listening. Many commented that if they did not listen they would get in trouble, be unsafe or be unaware of what to do. This interview reflected that children were not concerned about missing opportunities to learn something or gaining knowledge for themselves.

The last questions on the interview pertained to where (school or home) it is more important to listen and why it is important to listen there. Seventy-five percent of the students stated listening at both places was important and 25% stated school was more important for listening. No one thought home was a more important place to listen. All the children commented that listening at home and at school can keep one safe and that it is important to listen to people older than they are.

The parents of the eight chosen students were surveyed (Appendix B) to gain insight on parental attitudes toward their child's listening skills. Eight surveys were returned. The results of the surveys appear in Table 2.

Table 2

Site A Parental Survey, February 1999

QUESTION	YES	NO
Do you think your child has good listening skills?	7	1
Does your child listen only when the topic is of interest to him or her?	3	5
Do you think your child has learned how to listen?	6	2
Do you think listening affects your child's performance and grades?	7	1

Of the eight parents surveyed, 88% believe their own child has good listening skills and 12% does not believe their child has good listening skills. Sixty-three percent of the parents think their child will listen regardless of the topic and 37% think the topic must be of interest to the child. Parents commented that an interesting topic causes more effective listening as well as determines how much attention the child chooses to give to any given subject. Seventy-five percent of parents think their child has learned the skill of listening whereas 25% think their child has not learned this skill. One parent commented that the reason her child may not have learned to listen is that he distracts very easily. Eighty-eight percent of parents think listening is directly linked to a child's performance and grades and 12% believe it is not linked to performance but may be linked to grades.

Students were observed using a listening checklist (Appendix C) two times during the first week of data collection. Children were evaluated in three areas. The first area was quiet bodies, which means students were sitting still and not distracting others. The second area was nonverbal responses, which consists of any nonverbal acknowledgment

of what is being said (i.e. head nodding, hand raising). The third area was verbal responses, which includes all appropriate spoken comments

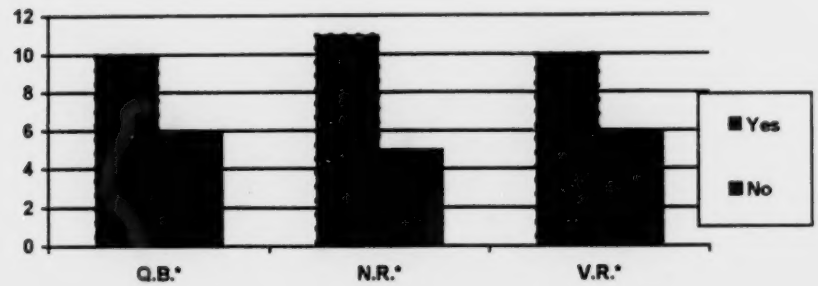

Figure 1. Site A listening checklist, February 1999

*Q.B.-Quiet Body, N.R.-Nonverbal Response, V.R. Verbal Response

Eight students were observed twice; therefore, the possible responses for each area is 16. The teacher researcher observed the indicated behaviors during a student play and a reading of student written stories. Those responses are divided between yes, meaning the students showed signs of this behavior, and no, meaning students did not exhibit this behavior. The students showed quiet bodies 63% of the time and exhibited signs of restlessness and fidgeting 37% of the time. The children responded nonverbally 69% of the time and showed no evidence of head nodding or other nonverbal actions 31% of the time. Verbal responses appeared during 63% of the activities and were absent the other 37%.

Baseline data indicate that one may not observe all three behaviors in a good listener. The teacher researchers sought to understand whether quiet bodies influence one's ability to appropriately respond verbally or nonverbally to what one is listening.

Students were given oral directions in which to draw a picture (Appendix D). These pictures were evaluated using a scoring rubric (Appendix E).

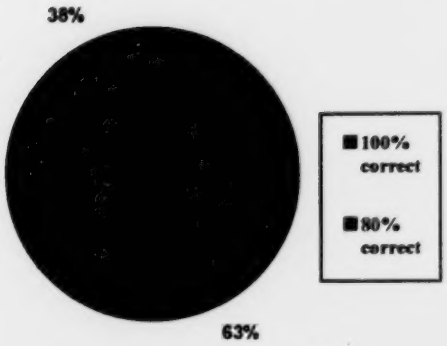

Figure 2. Site A listening journal entry 1, February 1999

The listening journal had a total of five points possible. According to the scoring rubric, 63% of the students earned 100% correct and 38% of the students earned 80% correct. Therefore, this graph shows that students earned either five or four points on listening journal entry one. No student received less that 80% on this activity.

The teacher researcher read aloud a short fable called The Lion and the Mouse (McCarthy, 1993). Students were instructed to listen carefully as no part of the story would be repeated and they would be answering questions. After the reading, students were given four comprehension questions to complete (Appendix F). The results of the comprehension questions are graphed in Figure 3.

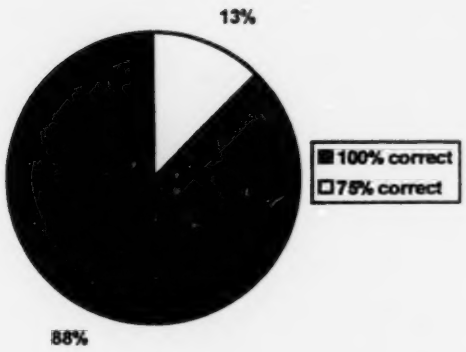

Figure 3. Fable comprehension question 1, February 1999

Eight students completed the fable questions. Of those eight, 88% of them earned a score of 100% correct. Twelve percent earned a score of 75% correct. No students earned a score less than 75%. The results show students were very good listeners during this activity.

Site B

In February, eight students were chosen to participate in the research intervention. The teacher researcher chose two gifted students, five average students, and three students with learning disabilities.

The eight students interviewed about their perceptions of listening. The students were interviewed individually and the teacher researcher recorded their oral responses. The interview consisted of eleven questions in which five required yes or no responses. The responses to the five questions are presented in the following table:

Table 3

Student Interview Responses Regarding Student Feelings Towards Listening Skills for Site B, Administered February 1999

February Interview 8 students interviewed	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you think you are a good listener?	4	1	3
Do you think you could be a better listener?	8	0	0
Do you think your teacher is a good listener?	8	0	0
Do you think your parents are good listeners?	7	0	1

The data in Table 7 reports 50% of students think they are good listeners while 12.5% think they are not and 37.5% think they are good listeners sometimes. One hundred percent of students think they can be a better listener and believe their teacher is a good listener. A large percent, 87.5% feel their parents are good listeners and 12.5% felt their parents are not.

In other questions, students were asked to describe different attributes in which listening entails. The eight students were asked what it means to be a good listener and how do they know when someone is listening to them. The students' responses to the two questions were very similar. All of the students responded the listener should be making eye contact. One student added, there should not be any interruptions, and another added the listener should not be playing with anything. From the student responses to these two questions, the teacher researcher can conclude that third graders are aware of what listening is, and that they feel eye contact is an integral part of listening.

Two other questions students were asked focused on when students believe they listen best and when they should listen best. The responses to when students believe they listen best were as follows: when someone is hurt, math meeting or story reading, when I'm at counseling, at my home, and, two responded, when people are talking and when someone is telling you something. The responses to when students feel they should listen best were as follows: when someone is talking to you, during school, and when you want someone to listen to you. Two students shared each of the following responses: when there is an assignment, when an adult is talking to you, when someone is saying something important.

Finally, the eight students were asked if they find it difficult to listen in school. All of the students responded yes and explained that it is because others are talking or making noise.

Eight parents were administered a survey to gain insight on how they perceive their child as a listener. None of the surveys were returned. (These students are in a residential school and parents often do not respond).

The teacher researcher also used observation as a means of collecting data. Eight students were observed two times during the first week of data collection for a total of sixteen recordings. The first observation was conducted during math meeting, which is the first activity of the day. Students are seated on the rug in front of a math bulletin board and participate to fill in the daily board. The second observation was recorded during a read-a-loud in late morning. Both were administered over a twenty-minute period. A checklist was used to record the data collected. Students were evaluated in three areas. The first was quiet bodies. For quiet bodies, the teacher researcher was

looking for the student to be sitting quietly with no distractions and not distracting others. The second area was nonverbal response. This consists of any nonverbal acknowledgment of what is being said. This may include head nodding, raising hands, etc. The third area being observed was verbal responses, which included all appropriate spoken responses. Figure 4 represents the numbers students who displayed the listening characteristics.

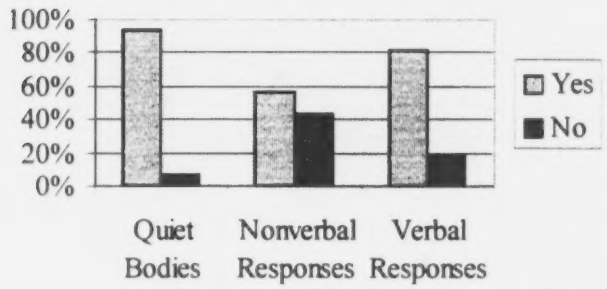

Figure 4. Listening observation checklist, February, 1999

The data presented in Figure 4 report during the two times students were observed 94% had quiet bodies, while 6% did not, 56% responded nonverbally while 44% did not, and 81% had verbal responses while 19% had nothing to say.

The eight students at Site B were also to complete a Listening Journal. The students were given five oral directions in which to draw a picture. The directions were evaluated with a scoring rubric. Table 5 represents the percentage of correct steps students followed.

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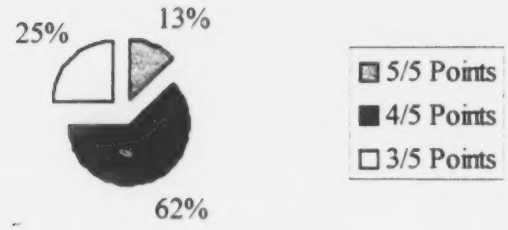

Figure 5. Percent correct on listening journal activity, February 1999

The data in Figure 5 report out of five oral steps, 13% of students earned five out of five possible points, 62% of students earned four out of five possible points, and 25% of students earned three out of five possible points. No one earned less than three points out of five possible.

During the baseline data collection week, eight students were also read a short fable, The Mice and the Cat (McCarthy, 1993). After the fable was complete, students were given four comprehension questions about the story. Figure 6 illustrates the correct responses to the fable comprehension questions.

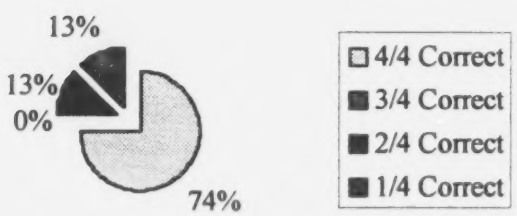

Figure 6. Fable comprehension questions, February, 1999

Seventy-five percent of the eight students answered all questions correctly, 0% answered three out of four correctly, while 25% answered two out of four, and one out of four correctly.

Site C

Seven target students were chosen at the beginning of the research. Since Site C is a multi-age classroom the teacher researcher chose to work only with the second grade population.

In February, students were interviewed about their perceptions of listening. The interview consisted of ten questions in which four required a yes or no response. While seven students were interviewed one student was only able to answer through question #3. The one student was unable to complete the interview due a lack of comprehension of the questions related to his communication disorder. The responses to the four yes or no questions are reported in the following table.

Table 4

Student Interview Responses

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you think you are a good listener?	6	0	1
Do you think that your teacher is a good listener?	6	0	0
Do you think that you could/should be a better listener?	6	0	0
Do you feel that your parents are good listeners?	6	0	0

The data reflects that 85.7% of the students feel that they are good listeners and 14.3% feel that they are not. While the majority of the students feel that they are already good listeners all of them felt that they could improve upon their listening skills. One

hundred percent of the students believe that both their teacher and their parents are good listeners.

The remaining six questions pertained to the students' opinions of listening. The students believe being a good listener means sitting quietly, looking at the person who is talking and learning. Students felt that you know somebody is listening to you if they are looking at you, conversing with you or following directions. The majority reported that they listen to the best of their ability at school while two students felt that they listened well all of the time. All students felt that they should use their best listening skills at school or while doing homework. The students communicated that it was important for them to listen at home and school in order to learn, be safe and for discipline reasons.

Seven parent surveys were administered to gain insight on attitudes towards their child's listening skills.

Table 5

Parent Survey

Question	Number or Yes Answers	Number of No Answers
Do you think your child has good listening skills?	5	2
Does your child listen only when the topic is of interest to him or her?	4	3
Do you think your child has learned how to listen?	4	3
Do you think listening affects your child's performance and grades?	7	0

All seven of the surveys administered to the parents were returned. The majority of the parents felt that their child was had the skill necessary to be a good listener. Those who believed that their child did not have good listening skills felt that this was due to outside distractions. While most parents believed that listening skills were present in

their child only four of the parents felt that their child had learned how to listen. One parent made the comment "How do you learn how to listen?" Four of the parents observed that their child only listens when the topic is pertinent to the student. All of the parents agreed that listening skills had an affect on performance and grades.

Students were observed three times during the first week of data collection. They were evaluated in three areas. The first area was quiet bodies, which means students were sitting still and not distracting others. The second area was nonverbal response, which consists of any nonverbal acknowledgement of what is being said (i.e., head nodding and raising hand). The third area was verbal responses, which includes all appropriate spoken comments.

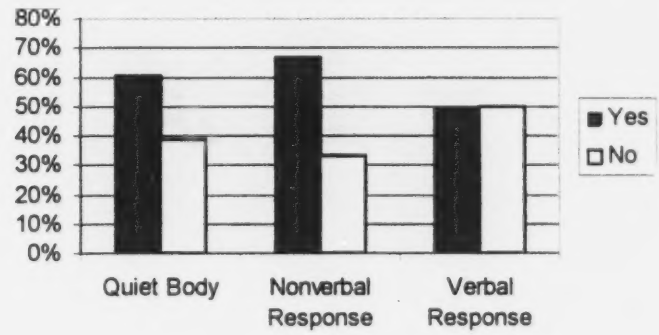

Figure 7. Listening observation checklist

The data indicates that the students were able to have quiet bodies and perform nonverbal responses the majority of the time. Quiet bodies were observed 60% of the time and nonverbal responses were observed 67% of the time. Students were only able to provide verbal responses 50% of the time.

Students were given oral directions in which to draw a picture. The picture contained five elements and was evaluated using a scoring rubric (Appendix).

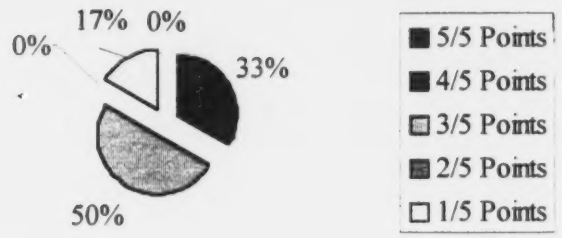

Figure 8. Points earned on listening journal flag activity

One point was given for each of the five elements of the picture. None of the student pictures contained all five of the elements, two students scored four points, three students scored three points, no students scored two points and one student scored one point.

The teacher researcher read a short fable, The Mice and the Cat to the students (McCarthy, 1993). After the reading, students were given four comprehension questions to complete.

The story was preceded with a discussion about fables and their morals. The students were forewarned that at the completion of the story they would be asked to answer questions pertaining to the story. The four comprehension questions consisted of both literal and inferential questions.

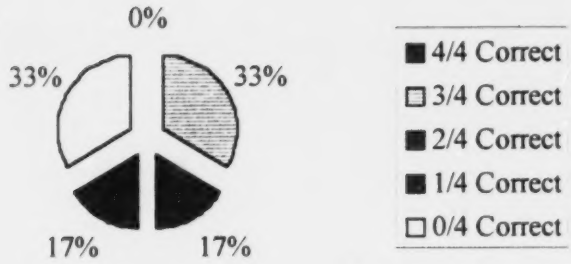

Figure 9. Correct answers for fable comprehension questions

None of the six students were able to correctly answer all four of the questions, two students were able to recall three correct answers, one answered two questions correctly, one answered one question correctly and two students were not able to answer any questions correctly.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests several underlying causes for the lack of listening skills in the school setting. According to Strother (1987), schools spend little time teaching listening skills because it is thought to be a simple process. However, researchers have avoided the study of listening because of its complexity. With both teachers and researchers avoiding the topic this important skill is being neglected. Leverentz and Garman (1987) state "listening is often undertaught primarily because it is not a simple skill".

Listening is not a simple skill to attain. Due to the complexity of this skill, student maturity does not necessarily indicate that listening skills are improving (Leverentz and Garman, 1987). Like any other skill, instruction and practice are needed to further develop one's ability to listen.

Schools systems are continually updating objectives for other academic areas, but it is rare that objectives are even written for listening. Few teachers, including the teacher researchers, have had training for listening instruction. In fact, Greg (as cited in Jalongo, 1995) states "less than 2 percent of the population has had any formal educational experience with listening".

Hunsaker (as cited in Jalongo, 1995) found that 80% of our knowledge is obtained through listening and Wolvin and Coakley (as cited in Jalongo, 1995) found that we expect children to listen for as much as 50% of the day. Funk and Funk (1989) state that many children are not good listeners. Since research supports the majority of knowledge is obtained through listening and that children are such poor listeners the teacher researchers conclude that a lack of listening skill instruction is not meeting the needs of the students.

The literature suggests several underlying causes for the lack of listening skills in the school setting. According to Strother (1987), schools spend little time teaching listening skills because it is thought to be a simple process. However, researchers have avoided the study of listening because of its complexity. With both teachers and researchers avoiding the topic this important skill is being neglected. Leverentz and Garman (1987) state "listening is often undertaught primarily because it is not a simple skill".

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Listening is a process that involves the active construction of meaning from what is heard. According to Jacobs (as cited in Jalongo, 1995) active listeners must "get involved in what they hear, both intellectually and emotionally." However, most people operate at only a 25 % listening efficiency level even though one acquires 80% of knowledge through listening (Hunsaker, 1990, p. 128).

When one examines listening as a skill it may be observed that it involves more than just hearing. Hearing is the first stage of listening when the actual sounds are recognized. One must next process what is heard in order to understand and remember, (Hunsaker, 1990, p. 126). In a learning environment a teacher would prefer to have children process what is heard. Therefore, listening needs to be viewed as a teachable skill as opposed to an automatic reflex.

The four essential components of communication are reading, writing, speaking and listening. All four components are of equal importance, so listening must be taught along with the other three areas. Nunan and Miller (1995) explain that listening is a vital part of a classroom. The skill of listening must be developed in sensing, interpreting,

evaluating and responding as stated by DeStefano, Dole and Marzano (as cited in Jalongo, 1991). Interpretation and evaluation are higher level thinking skills that need instruction to be developed.

Educators can promote improved listening skills by incorporating many strategies in the classroom. According to Funk and Funk (1989), teachers should provide a purpose for listening, set the stage for listening, provide for follow-up experiences to listening activities and use methodology that promotes positive listening habits. The teacher researchers' purpose is to implement several listening strategies in the classroom. In doing this, students will develop the skills necessary for active listening.

According to Chambers and Lowry (as cited in Marlow, 1979):

> Active listening implies readiness, listening for a special purpose. Children listen actively to a spelling list being read by a teacher, since after they hear a word on the list, they are required to write it on paper.
>
> Active listening does not comprise most of the child's listening efforts. Often he does not know how or when to listen actively. He will usually need clues so that he can listen in an active way. A good teacher will provide these clues. (p.10)

The teacher researchers provide six clues, or interventions, to increase active listening in their classrooms. The six interventions are teacher modeling, listening for a purpose, musical anchors, imagery, prediction and paraphrasing.

Teacher modeling reinforces appropriate listening skills. According to Malaguzzi (as cited in Jalongo 1995) "adults can teach children to listen, first and foremost, by being good listeners themselves." If students feel listened to they may be more apt to listen to others. Students will also observe the body language and verbal response

involved when one is listening. This may influence how the children respond when required to be attentive.

Knowing the purpose for listening can also influence one's listening skills. Giving a purpose for listening allows students to know what they will be held accountable for and where they should focus their listening. Funk and Funk (1989) suggests children "need guidance as to what they are expected to learn from each listening activity and this guidance should increase the comprehension and retention." Nichols (as cited in Strother 1987) discovered a person's listening ability is faster than normal conversation. Therefore, much of what is heard can be lost. Providing students with a purpose also gives them the opportunity to weed out any unneeded information that may allow for easier focusing.

People naturally associate certain everyday sounds with meaning. For example, a siren may mean trouble, birds singing may mean daybreak and schools bells may mean the end of the day.

> These experiences elicit thoughts, memories and feelings. This happens all the time in your class. From the place you stand, to the motions you make, students are conditioned to elicit a certain state or give a certain response. You can use this to your advantage (DePorter, Reardon &Singer-Nourie, 1999, p. 133).

One way to use this to one's advantage is to incorporate music. Music can be used to develop associations between songs and activities. For instance, when students hear a particular song, they process it to mean it is time to clean up.

The use of imagery teaches children how to make a mental picture of what they are hearing. When they have the ability of connecting what they hear to something that is

already stored in their minds they are more apt to process and internalize the information. "Your brain naturally creates, edits, stores and retrieves images. This happens automatically, and is directly influenced by the words you hear. The human brain creates images constantly. This happens either through sensory input that's visual, auditory or both"(DePorter et al., 1999, p.119). Teaching students to be aware of this natural tool helps them to utilize it with their every day listening.

According to Jalongo (1996) higher level listening occurs when one uses imagery to comprehend meaning and react to what has been heard. Predicting also promotes thinking at a higher level. Both imagery and predicting could be utilized during auditory lessons. Students may use their prior knowledge to connect what is heard with a mental image of what may happen next. Brent and Anderson state (as cited in Swanson, 1996) that providing instruction in the area of prediction allows students to identify main ideas, draw justifiable inferences, distinguish between fact and fiction and critically analyze information. The skill of predicting automatically lends itself to two of the four areas of listening skills. Prediction involves interpreting visual and auditory messages. Prediction also requires evaluating by combining prior knowledge with what may happen and organizing them into one outcome.

The experiences that directly follow a listening activity are a related extension. Different methods of paraphrasing provide opportunities to check comprehension of what has been learned and allow children to apply new information according to Funk and Funk (1989). Students need to relate subject matter to their lives to make it meaningful. One way to monitor listening skills as related to direction is to have children act out what they are to do next (adapted from Brown cited in Jalongo, 1995). This involves the

listeners and allows for paraphrasing to be conducted kinesthetically. The researchers note that including the use of the body for young children seems imperative as movement can often keep interest easier than words.

Words, both oral and written, are another component of paraphrasing after listening activities. Brent and Anderson (1993) state that the time spent in whole class discussion fosters sharing ideas and interpretations. When children know they will have time to communicate thoughts after a listening activity, they may be more apt to try to internalize what they are hearing. Class discussions encourage repetition of what is heard (Ediger, 1979) in a listening activity; therefore, additional reinforcement is available.

Written journals and logs can also reinforce listening skills. Providing these meaningful follow-up activities promotes the "positive perception that there is a reason for listening" (Funk and Funk, 1989). As stated above, children are more inclined to listen when given a purpose. Written work requires reflection and digestion of the material presented. Children are able to form opinions and privately express their feelings toward a certain subject matter. If the journaling assignment is given prior to the listening activity, the listener may "listen with a questioning mind" (Strother, 1987).

Teacher modeling, listening for a purpose, musical anchors, imagery, prediction, and paraphrasing are all examples of activities that promote higher-order listening skills. When students are able to utilize these higher-order skills, they are able to become more focused and engaged in classroom activities.

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Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of these proposed strategies, during the period of January to May of 1999, the targeted students will demonstrate an increase in engaged listening as measured by teacher observation checklists, surveys, anecdotal records, interviews and student reflection journals. Teacher materials and actions fostering motivation will be implemented, and the teacher will model appropriate listening skills. In order to accomplish the objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Students will be able to interpret music cues as transitional anchors.
2. Students will be able to use imagery to visualize what they heard.
3. Students will be able to paraphrase ideas they have heard.
4. Students will be able to make predictions relevant to discussion or activity.
5. Students will be able to identify the purpose for which they are listening.

These processes will be incorporated into normal classroom procedure.

Project Action Plan

Week 1 - 12
1. Introduce appropriate listening skills through teacher modeling
2. Give all listening activities a specific purpose
3. Introduce and use musical anchors

Week 1
1. Send home parent letter and parent listening survey
2. Conduct student listening interview
3. Student listening checklist

Week 2
1. Collection of data through student listening survey
2. Introduce and conduct first food imagery activity
3. Introduce and conduct first listening journal
3. Introduce and conduct first fable listening activity

Week 3
1. Introduce imagery lessons with Tell Your Neighbor activity (Appendix G)

Week 4
1. Continue use of Tell Your Neighbor imagery activity
2. Second listening journal and food imagery activities
3. Student listening checklist

Week 5
1. Introduce the use of buzz words
2. Introduce paraphrasing kinesthetically

Week 6
1. Begin use of reflection journals
2. Continue use of buzz words and paraphrasing kinesthetically

Week 7
1. Continue use of reflection journals
2. Continue use of buzz words

Week 8
1. Conduct third food imagery activity
2. Conduct listening journal activity
3. Second fable activity (Appendix H)
4. Student listening checklist

Week 9
1. Introduce story book prediction
2. Continue use of reflection journal

Week 10
1. Continue story book prediction
2. Continue use of refection journal

Week 11
1. Conduct final fable activity (Appendix I)
2. Conduct final food imagery activity
3. Conduct final listening journal activity
4. Continue use of reflection journals

Week 12
1. Student listening observation checklist
2. Student listening interview
3. Continue use of reflection journals

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, scoring rubrics will be developed for listening journal and imagery activities. Comprehension questions will be asked following short, oral stories. Anecdotal records and observation checklists will be recorded as well.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

Site A

The objective of this project was to increase the engaged listening time of elementary students. The use of imagery, prediction, paraphrasing and identifying a purpose were all selected to impact the change in listening behaviors. As a result of implementing the chosen interventions, the teacher researchers were seeking evidence of increased listening during class time. The strategies began in February 1999. A summary of twelve weeks of intervention follows.

The first week in February 1999 students were interviewed regarding perceptions of listening. Parents were surveyed on how they perceive their children as listeners. Students were also observed twice using an observation checklist during the baseline week. Once baseline data were recorded, the teacher researchers began to introduce the intervention. Each intervention strategy was given a concentrated three week period to be introduced, used and measured before introducing another strategy.

Students were required to participate in a listening journal activity. The listening journal activities gave specific directions for objects to be drawn on the entry page. The

journal had five entries during the course of the intervention. The first entry was made during baseline week. Other entries were made after completing each of the three week concentrated intervention strategies.

Another measurement used throughout the intervention was the fable stories. Students were read a story and asked to answer comprehension questions. The first story was read during intervention week. Subsequent stories were read in week six and week twelve. The teacher researchers intended to use fable stories and listening journal entries to measure listening skill improvement.

The first strategy was imagery. Students were instructed to make a picture in the mind of what they were hearing. During weeks two through four, the teacher researcher stopped during various lessons for children to make mental images. Once a week for the three weeks, students were told a story and asked to visualize what they heard in their minds. Upon the conclusion of the story, students were asked to draw on a note card what they saw in their minds.

The second intervention strategy used was prediction. Many students were familiar with this skill as it was used casually in the classroom prior to intervention time. During prediction weeks five through eight, students were asked to tell their neighbor what they think will happen next. Students were required to talk for 30 seconds making up anything they think might happen. The partner had a turn to speak during the next pause in the story. The teacher researcher did not take a formal measurement on this strategy.

The third strategy was paraphrasing and was introduced during weeks nine through twelve. This skill was taught primarily through large group activities and oral

directions. The teacher researcher gave directions and asked various students to retell those directions to the class or to their neighbor. Students were also asked to paraphrase stories read to the class, or movies shown to the class or class discussions. A reflection journal in connection with an author study was used to paraphrase six stories read orally to the class. Students were also introduced to notetaking during movie times.

The musical anchor strategy was used only once. It was intended for use during the entire intervention; however, the teacher researcher at Site A abandoned this technique. It was realized that this strategy was enjoyable, possibly effective and extremely inconvenient. Site A uses different music throughout the day and taking time to find the correct song on the correct compact disc was awkward.

Throughout the whole intervention the teacher researcher used two strategies that were more teacher based than student based. The teacher researcher gave the students a purpose for listening and modeled appropriate listening skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Site A

In order to practice the use of imagery to increase listening skills, students were given direct instruction as how to picture what was being said in their minds. During weeks two through four, imagery was the skill the teacher researcher stressed. Over the coarse of the research, students were assessed three different times to determine if this was a skill they used appropriately. The results of the imagery pictures are in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Site A Imagery Journal For Weeks Two Through Four, February 1999

Imagery Story	Picture related to story	Picture unrelated to story
Cookies story February 8, 1999	7	1
Favorite meal March 8, 1999	8	0
Fruit story April 12, 1999	8	0

Students demonstrate use of this skill 88% of the time in February. Student achievement increases to 100% appropriate use of this skill in March and April. The use of imagery appears to have a positive effect on listening when the teacher directly instructs students.

Prediction was the skill directly taught by the teacher researcher during weeks five through eight. Anecdotal records show the use of telling the neighbor one's prediction was good two times. Students began complaining about having to stop the story. One student stated that the teacher researcher was "acting like we aren't going to listen to the story." The teacher researcher stopped using this strategy.

Students were taught to paraphrase during weeks nine through twelve. Most paraphrasing was practiced orally in a large group; however, the teacher researcher required several written activities to measure the use of this skill. One written activity was implemented after a movie. Students were told prior to the movie that they would be writing four general ideas related to a documentary on clouds. The results of this activity appear in Figure 10 below.

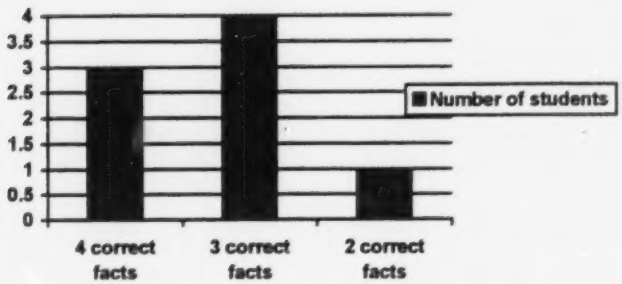

Figure 10. Site A Paraphrasing activity 1, March 1999

Students showed ability to paraphrase in varying degrees. Thirty-eight percent of students were able to paraphrase the four key concepts where 50% paraphrased three concepts and 12% paraphrased two concepts. This paraphrasing activity shows that identifying and rewording nonfiction concepts may work for 88% of the children, for they obtained 75% or better on key concept identification.

The other tool used to teach paraphrasing was a reflection journal. The teacher researcher used the reflection journal in relation to an author study of Kevin Henkes' books. A total of six entries were made in the journal beginning April 6, 1999 and continuing through April 30, 1999. Each journal entry required a statement about what the writer liked or disliked about the particular story. The entries were required to have a detail related to the main plot of the story. All students were able to meet the requirements 100% of the time. Both paraphrasing activity data suggest that paraphrasing is an appropriate skill for increasing listening skills.

The final listening journal entry was made in week twelve of the intervention. The results are presented in Figure 11 along with the results from the February entry for comparative reasons.

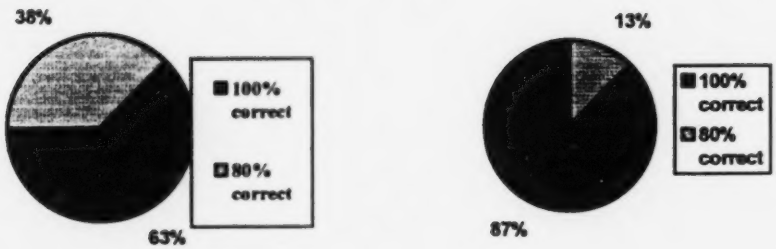

Figure 11. Site A Listening journal entry 1 and 5, February and May 1999, respectively

Comparison in Figure 11 shows an increase in listening skill by 24%. At the beginning of the intervention only 63% of all students earned a 100% on the journal entries according to the rubric. At the end of the intervention 87% of all students were able to earn 100% on the journal entry as judged by the same rubric.

The fable story The Mouse and the Seashore (McCarthy, 1993) was used in week twelve to measure listening improvement in comparison to the fable story used in week one.

Figure 12. Site A Fable comprehension questions 1 and 3, February and May 1999, respectively

The comparison between the results of fable comprehension questions one and fable comprehension questions three as seen in Figure 12 shows listening did improve.

One hundred percent of the students answered all four questions correctly. This reflects a 12% increase from fable comprehension question 1.

Historical Description of the Intervention

Site B

A 12 week intervention was implemented at Site B. During the first week in February 1999; the teacher researcher gathered data to determine students' perceptions of listening and how well they listen. This data was collected through the use of student interviews, parent surveys, and an observation checklist.

Students were interviewed orally by the teacher researcher, once during the first week of February. They were also observed twice for a twenty minutes during the first week. An observation checklist was used to record whether the students had quiet bodies, verbal and nonverbal responses while listening. Parent interviews were sent home during this week to find out how parents perceive their children as listeners.

During the intervention period, students were introduced to listening strategies to further develop their listening skills. The strategies implemented were imagery, prediction, paraphrasing, and identifying the purpose for listening. Each strategy was introduced, used and measured for a three-week period prior to implementing the next.

Throughout the entire intervention, students completed listening journal activities and questions on fable stories. The listening journal consisted of five oral directions that were given to students to complete a picture for an entry. The journal consisted of five entries over the course of the intervention. The first entry was made during the baseline data collection week and the last at the close of the intervention. The remaining three were made after implementing each of the other three-week intervention strategies. The

fable stories were read orally to students, and the students were to answer comprehension questions. The first fable was read during baseline collection week and others were read during weeks six and twelve. These two strategies were used to allow the teacher researcher to measure the students' improvement of listening skills.

Out of the four three-week intervention strategies, imagery was introduced to the students first. The teacher researcher explained the use of the "mind's eye" to students. This is when the students close their eyes and are able to see a mental image or picture. Once every three weeks, students were told a descriptive story about cookies baking, fruit or a favorite meal without specifically identifying the items. After completion of each story, students were instructed to draw a picture of what type of cookies, fruit, or meal they saw with their mind's eye.

The second intervention strategy was the use of prediction. Because prediction has been used in an informal, unscripted way in the classroom, students were familiar with the strategy. The use of formal prediction was used during weeks five through eight. During this time students were read a variety of stories. The teacher researcher would pause at points in the story and instruct students to "tell your neighbor" what they thought would happen next. Students would alternate making predictions with their partners at the pauses throughout the stories. The teacher researcher did not take a formal measurement on this strategy, however, did make anecdotal recordings.

The final intervention strategy used was paraphrasing. This strategy was used during weeks nine through twelve. This skill was implemented during large group instruction of content area subjects. Throughout the lessons students were asked to

rephrase specific concepts in their own words. Once they had done this, they were to discuss this with a partner.

The teacher researcher also implemented two other strategies on a daily basis throughout the intervention. These strategies were listening for a purpose and teacher modeling. Listening for a purpose was used during large group direct instruction of content area subjects. Prior to a lesson, the teacher researcher gave students specific questions to write in a reflection journal. The answered would be covered in the lesson. Following the lesson, students were to answer the questions in their journal to the best of their knowledge. For teacher modeling, the teacher researcher would model appropriate listening skills while students were talking.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Site B

In order to further develop children's listening several listening strategies were practiced during the intervention to improve upon or strengthen current listening skills. These strategies were the use of imagery, prediction, paraphrasing, listening for a purpose and teacher modeling.

The teacher researcher discussed the use of imagery with the students. She called it using the "mind's eye." When this was discussed children related very well to the strategy. They had agreed that they have all seen pictures in their minds, but had never talked about seeing the images or thought they could use them to their advantage when learning. During weeks two through four, students practiced the use of this skill through three separate imagery stories. The teacher researcher instructed children to close their eyes and gave a detailed description of an item without telling what the specific item was.

The descriptions the teacher researcher gave were of cookies baking, a piece of juicy fruit and a favorite meal. Once the verbal description was complete the students were to draw a picture of what item their mind's eye saw. Out of eight, seven drew a picture of different types of cookies, making an 88% accuracy rate. Students showed improvement in the second and third pictures. Both times students earned a score of 100%. After each imagery practice, the students shared their pictures and differences were discussed. Students realized that although the pictures might be of different items, they still fit the descriptions that students heard.

During weeks five through eight, prediction was taught and practiced. Because the teacher researcher uses prediction in several different areas the students were familiar with the strategy. The teacher researcher took a more formal approach than is normally used in the classroom. Students were formally taught through direct instruction to use the information the have heard previously to determine what will happen next or the outcome. Once the use of prediction was directly taught, the teacher researcher used read alouds to practice. During a read aloud, the teacher researcher would pause at different times in the story. During the pauses students would tell each other what they thought would happen next while the other questioned why the predictor thought that way. The students alternated being the predictor and the questioner. There was no formal measurement taken; however, the teacher researcher did take anecdotal records. While prediction was being used, the teacher researcher noted that the prediction activity kept the children interested and engaged. Some of the first recording noted that although students were enjoying themselves, some of the students' predictions, or reasoning

behind the predictions were a little off topic. However, after the first few trials the students' predictions began to focus on the topic at hand.

Paraphrasing was practiced during weeks nine through twelve. Throughout whole group, content area instruction the teacher researcher would pause and ask students to rephrase and record the specific concept that they just heard. Once they had rephrased and recorded, students discussed the similarities and differences of their wording with a partner. Through the use of anecdotal recordings, the teacher researcher found that students used several means of paraphrasing. Some wrote one or two words for each concept, others wrote a paragraph trying to get in every word that was dictated, while a few wrote words that were unrelated to the topic. The teacher researcher thought students would try different means once they saw the different techniques that had been used by their peers; however the student responses stayed the same in length an content. The teacher researcher believes that the use of paraphrasing helped students retain concepts. Since children learn in a variety of ways, they were able to take what they heard and put it into a context they will understand and remember. The teacher researcher observed an increase in student involvement and participation.

In order to assess the effects of the implementation of teaching listening strategies in the classroom, the data which was collected during the base line week is compared to that which was collected at the closing of the action research plan. This was collected with the use of listening journals and fable stories.

Of the five journal entries throughout the intervention, the final entry was made during week twelve. To determine the growth students had made with increased listening

skills, the results for journal entries in week one and twelve were compared. A comparison of the results can be seen in Figure 13.

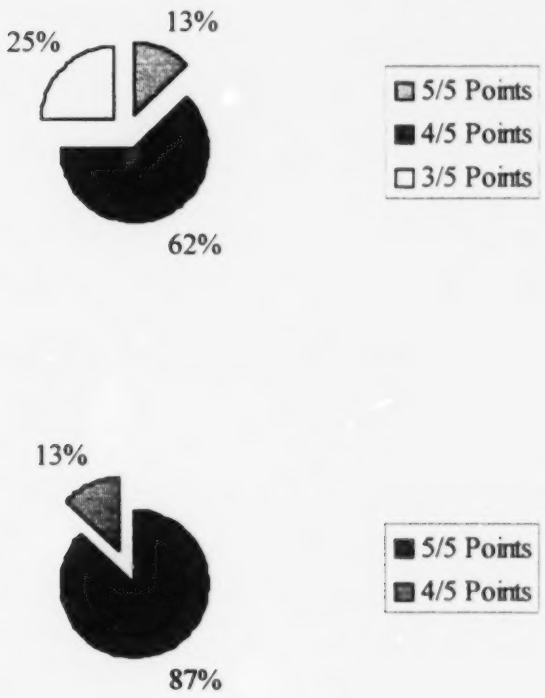

Figure 13. Pre and post data collected for listening journal

Figure 13 shows a comparison between pre and post intervention student listening journal scores. The data show that students' listening skills had improved significantly. Students who drew all of the oral instructions correctly increased by 74%. At the start of the intervention only 13% of students had all of the drawing steps drawn correctly. After the twelve-week intervention, the percent of students with all the drawing steps drawn correctly had increased to 87%. The data also report at the start of the intervention 25% of the students had drawn two of the five steps incorrectly, while at the closing of the intervention 0% of students drew two incorrectly.

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During week twelve, students were read aloud the last of three fable stories, The Mice and the Cat (McCarthy, 1993). The comprehension questions that students answered at the end of the story were compared to those from the first fable story, The Lion and the Mouse (McCarthy, 1993).

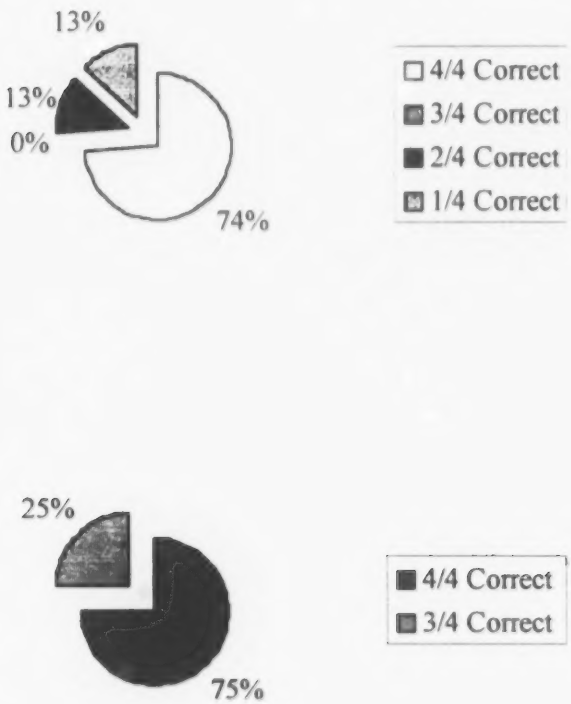


Figure 14. Pre and post data collect for fable story comprehension story

The pre intervention data show 74% of students answered all fable comprehension questions correctly, 0% answered three out of four questions correctly, 13% answered two out of four correctly, and 13% answered one out of four correctly. The post intervention data show a minimal increase in accuracy. Seventy-five percent of students were able to answer all questions correctly and 25% of students answered three out of four correctly. Overall, students had an increase of 1% when earning all possible

points, and increased by 25% when answering three out of four correctly. The post intervention data also show that no students answered less than three out of four comprehension questions correctly.

Historical Description of the Intervention

Site C

The object of this project was to improve student listening skills by providing direction instruction and practice in specific subskills. The subskills that were targeted for this project are imagery, paraphrasing, and prediction. The intervention was completed during the course of 12 weeks. One student moved out of the school district during the intervention.

The first week of the intervention consisted of collecting baseline data. The data collected was is the form of a parent survey, a student interview, observation checklists, comprehension questions, and listening journals.

Weeks two through four targeted the subskill of imagery. Students were given direct instruction on how to use their "mind's eye" to picture what is being said. When instruction began, many students acknowledge seeing pictures in their heads during stories. However, they were unaware how to use this to their advantage. Students were instructed to use their mind's eye during listening activities to picture what was being said. This subskill was practiced using descriptive stories and poems on a daily basis.

Weeks five through eight consisted of direct instruction and practice in the area of paraphrasing. Activities included direction paraphrasing, journal paraphrasing, and the use of buzzwords. Direction paraphrasing consisted of the teacher researcher giving a direction to complete an assignment or a task and students restating the information in

their own words. Students writing about a given topic in their journals, reading their entry to the class, and the class restating what had been said practiced journal paraphrasing.

Buzzwords were teacher researcher chosen words that were "off-limits". The buzzwords consisted of words that are common in everyday language in a school: pencil, desk, cool, line, boys, and girls. During a specified time, students and teachers were not allowed to use these words. Due to the difficult nature of this activity the teacher researcher decided to stop this activity before the designated time. This was attempted for a period of one week.

The final four weeks of intervention targeted the skill of prediction. This intervention included the teacher researcher reading to the students on a daily basis. Throughout the story the teacher researcher would pause and ask the students to share with their neighbor, or with the class, what they think might happen. The teacher researcher would also pause to check if there were any correct predictions. The teacher researcher also utilized a language workbook on inferences for this portion of the intervention.

During the final week of intervention students were assessed in order to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. Students were observed using a listening checklist, answered questions related to a fable they had listened to, and were instructed to draw a picture in their listening journal after they had been given specific instructions.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Site C

The students' ability to use imagery was assessed on three occasions during weeks two through four. For the first two assessments the students were read a detailed story and asked to draw a related picture. The third assessment differed in that the poem "Recipe For A Hippopotamus Sandwich" was read instead of a story (Silverstein, 1974). The results of these assessments are found in Table 7.

Table 7

Site C Imagery Pictures

Imagery Story	Picture related to story/poem	Picture not related to story/poem
Cookie Story February 8, 1999	6	1
Favorite Meal Story February 15, 1999	6	1
Poem February 22, 1999	7	0

During the first two assessments 86% of the students were able to draw a picture that directly related to the story. The final assessment indicates that 100% of the students were able to effectively illustrate a picture related to the poem. Imagery instruction seems to have had a positive affect on the students' ability to use their mind's eye in isolated activities.

The next phase of the intervention targeted paraphrasing. The students struggled with this phase. They were unable to comprehend how to reword or rephrase a statement or direction. The teacher researcher believes that this difficulty was due to the nature of the students' disabilities. The students have a difficult time processing and producing

simple language and to ask them to process information and then give it back using different language seemed overwhelming.

Students were unable to successfully complete direction paraphrasing. The best that they were able to do was to give back the information exactly as the teacher researcher gave it. On the occasions that the teacher researcher attempted to push this issue the students were so confused that they were unable to complete the original task.

The use of buzzwords was equally as frustrating. Often, students simply forgot that they were not supposed to use the word. When the students did remember that they couldn't use a particular word they became so frustrated in not being able to find alternative language that they gave up. As noted earlier, the teacher researcher stopped this intervention after one week.

Journal paraphrasing was extremely difficult for the students in the beginning but proved to get a little easier as the weeks went on. In the beginning the teacher researcher needed to ask direct questions in order to get the class to process what was read (ex. "She said that she likes pizza. What does she like on her pizza?"). By the end of the three-week period the teacher researcher was able to ask more general questions (ex. "What did she write in her journal?"). While the students were able to answer the literal questions that the teacher researcher asked, the answers were given exactly as the student had read them. They were not able to form answers in their own words. With the exception of one student, students were not able to answer any inferential questions.

During the final four weeks student seemed to grasp the concept of prediction. They were able to communicate a prediction to the teacher researcher and their peers

while listening to a story. They were also able to successfully utilize this skill to complete paper and pencil activities.

During the final week of intervention students were assessed in order to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. Students were observed using a listening checklist, were asked to answer questions related to a fable they had listened to, and were asked to draw a picture in their listening journal given specific instructions.

Students were observed for the listening checklist on two occasions. The results are compared to the pre-intervention results in the Figure 15.

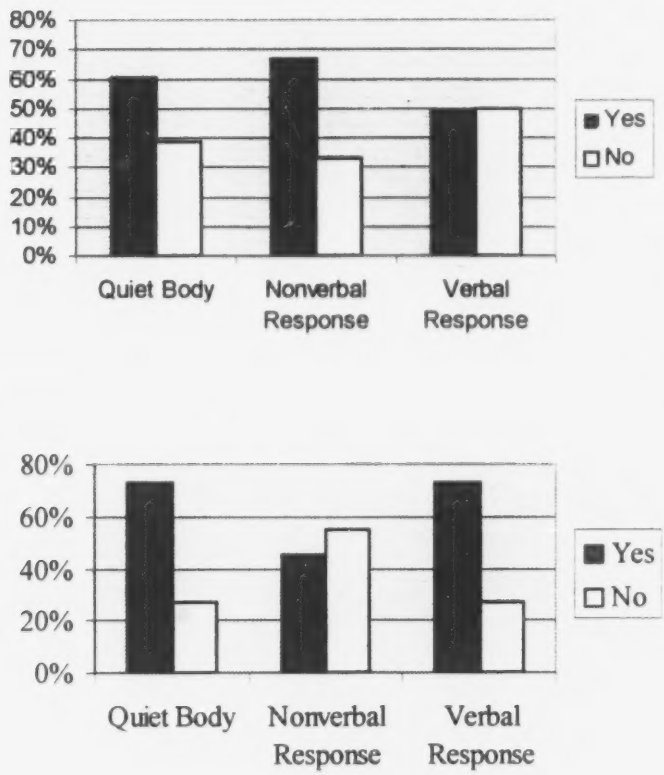
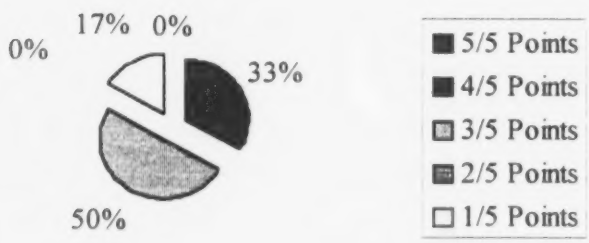


Figure 15. Pre and post listening observation checklist

The data indicated that students improved in the areas of quiet body and verbal responses. Students increased their ability to have quiet bodies from 61% of the time to

73% of the time. In addition students increased their verbal responses by 23%. However, they did show regression in the area of nonverbal responses. In February students exhibited nonverbal responses 67% of the time. By the end of the intervention students only demonstrated nonverbal responses 45% of the time. The teacher researcher believes that this regression is positive in that students were verbally responding more and therefore not needing to rely upon nonverbal responses as much as before.

Students had been assessed using the listening journal on five occasions throughout the intervention. For the final assessment students were given instructions on how to draw a picture of a lake scene. These results are compared with the results from the baseline data in Figure 16.



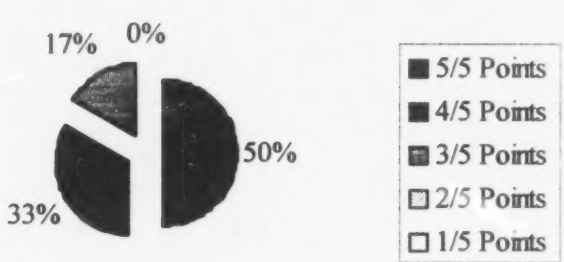


Figure 16. Pre and post listening journal activities

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The data in Figure 16 indicate that students improved upon their listening journal scores. In February no students were able to produce a picture that scored five out of five possible points. By April, three students were able to attain this. Two students earned four out of five points in both February and April. One student received three points after intervention as opposed to three students during baseline. No students earned two points on either assessment. One student received one point at the beginning while none did at the conclusion.

At the conclusion of the intervention students were again asked to listen to a fable and answer comprehension questions. The results are found in the following figure.

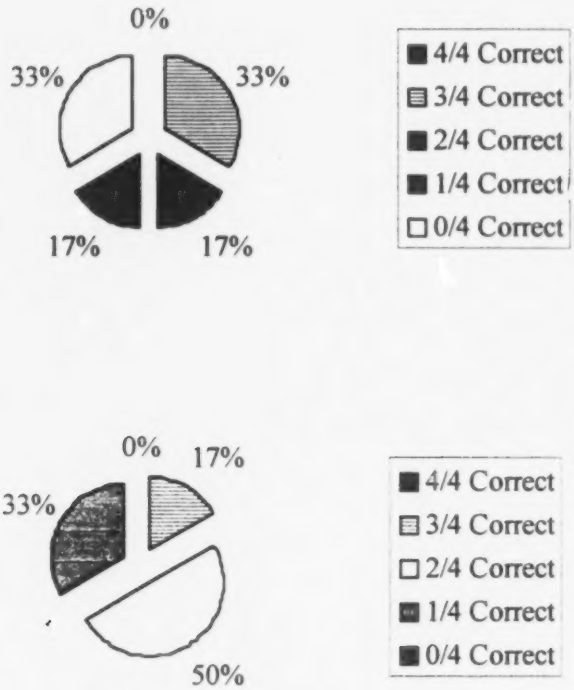

Figure 17. Pre and post fable comprehension questions

Students showed improvement in answering questions related to a fable. In February, zero students answered four questions correctly, two students answered three questions correctly, one student answered two questions correctly, one student answered one question correctly, and two students were not able to answer any questions correctly. At the conclusion of the interventions it remained that zero students were able to answer all questions correctly. One student responded correctly to one question, three students successfully answered two questions, two students were able to answer one question, and no students missed all four questions.

The teacher researcher's anecdotal records reveal that while the students were successful with most of the intervention strategies and did show gain on the tested items that they did not successfully transfer the targeted skills into their everyday learning.

Conclusion

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, the results of all measured data reflect an increase in listening skills. However, the teacher researchers' anecdotal records reflect a different outcome. The teacher researcher observed fine listening skills in areas related to the research. Those skills did not show transfer to everyday activities in the classroom. The teacher researchers did not see evidence of any skill without a teacher prompt.

One important note was that anytime the teacher researchers prompted students with a purpose for listening, their skills improved greatly. There was no formal measure of the impact of listening for a purpose; however, the teacher researchers found that this was the most effective strategy as per their observations.

After completing the research the teacher researchers conclude that listening goes beyond classroom instruction. There are many factors that impact this skill. These factors may be as simple as distracting background noise or as complex as the way individual brains function.

Recommendations

The teacher researchers believe that implementing and evaluating this action research project would be easier if their school systems supported flexible curriculums. The school systems' focus is driven by standardized testing and state goals. Therefore, it is difficult to deviate to from the prescribed curriculum. The teacher researchers do not recommend implementing a listening program without the full support of the school system.

Prior to implementing a listening program, the teacher researchers recommend that a teacher evaluate her own listening habits. By modeling appropriate listening skills, it may be easier to teach them to children. Training would be beneficial in how to use specific strategies to include listening instruction as a part of the language arts curriculum.

Listening instruction needs to begin at the earliest stages of learning, which begins in the home. Formal education of listening skills should begin at the preschool level and continue throughout the educational career.

If a listening program is going to be implemented the teacher researchers recommend the following. Students must be given a purpose for listening in all areas of the curriculum. The teacher should post a schedule of the day. This will allow the students to be prepared for what will come throughout the day. Preparing the students

allows them to concentrate on the task at hand. Prior to each lesson students should be given an agenda of what is expected.

At the conclusion of this project the teacher researchers discovered some additional resources for information and listening activities. These can be found in Oral Language Resource Book (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994), Oral Language Developmental Continuum (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994), and Oral Communication: speaking and listening (Hunsaker, 1990).

The assessment tools used in this program were unreliable. The teacher researchers found it difficult to accurately assess the listening skills while trying to teach. The teacher researchers recommend a trained professional to record data and take anecdotal records during classtime.

Listening is also very difficult to see. The teacher researchers express concern for accuracy and measurement of any listening program. Listening can be identified only by outcomes, and one must assume the results are, in fact, due to listening interventions.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Listening Interview

1. Tell me what it means to be a good listener (what does it look like)?
2. How do you know when someone is listening to you?
3. Do you think you are a good listener? Yes or no? Why do you think that?
4. Do you think that your teacher is a good listener? Yes or no? Why do you think that?
5. When do you feel you listen best?
6. When should you use your best listening skills?
7. Do you think you could/should be a better listener? If yes, how? If no, why not?
8. Do you feel your parents are good listeners? Why or why not?
9. Why is it important to listen at school? Home?
10. Do you feel it is more important to listen at home or at school? Why?

Appendix B

Parent Listening Survey

1. Do you think your child has good listening skills?

   Yes_____ No_____

2. Does your child listen only when the topic is of interest to him or her?

   Yes_____ No_____

3. Do you think your child has learned how to listen?

   Yes_____ No_____

4. Do you think listening affects your child's performance and grades?

   Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

Appendix C

Date:

Listening Checklist

Student	Quiet body	Nonverbal Response	Verbal Response

Appendix D

Listening Journal Activities

Flag – Week 1
I see a big flag
With a stripe on each side
With a heart in the middle
With a star in each corner
With polka dots all over

House – Week 4
I see a big house
With a door
With four windows
With a chimney
With a bush on the side

Face – Week 7
I see a big face
With 3 eyes
With a nose on the chin
With a mouth in the middle
With 1 curly hair on top

A Pet Store – Week 10
I see a pet store
With a mouse on the floor
With a dog on a leash
With a cat with big ears
With a fish in a bowl

A Lake – Week 12
I see a big lake
With a boat in the middle
With a person on the land
Standing by a car
With a sun in the sky

Appendix E

Listening Journal Rubric

0 Points	Drawing does not contain any of the required elements
1 Point	Drawing contains one of the required elements
2 Points	Drawing contains two of the required elements
3 Points	Drawing contains three of the required elements
4 Points	Drawing contains four of the required elements
5 Points	Drawing contains all of the required elements

- The required elements for each individual picture can be found in the Listening Journal Activities.

Appendix F

The Lion and the Mouse

1. Who is the story about? _____

_____

_____

2. Tell how one character helps the other. _____

_____

_____

3. How did the lion get stuck in the tree? _____

_____

_____

4. What kind of food was the mouse looking for? _____

_____

_____

Appendix G

Imagery Stories

Have the students close their eyes and listen to a story. Use descriptive language to tell the story based on the following outlines.

Cookies

I. Winter day

II. Go outside to play

III. Come in to the smell of fresh baked cookies

IV. Draw what cookies you see in your mind's eye

Favorite Meal

I. You've been at school all day and are very hungry

II. Normally on this night you have liver for dinner

III. You walk in the house and smell something different

IV. You smell your favorite meal cooking

V. You peak in the oven

VI. Draw what you see in the oven

Fruit

I. It's a hot summer day

II. You've been swimming all day

III. Your mom brings you a snack to the pool

IV. It's a piece of fruit

V. Draw what you see

Appendix H

The Mouse at the Seashore

1. Where did the mouse want to go? _____

_____

_____

2. What happened to the mouse on his trip? _____

_____

_____

3. What did the mouse think of the seashore? _____

_____

_____

5. Who did the mouse want with him? _____

_____

_____

Appendix I

The Mice and the Cat

1. Who is the story about? _____

_____

_____

2. How did the dog help? _____

_____

_____

3. What do they put on the cat? _____

_____

_____

4. Why do they need to put this object on the cat? _____

_____

_____